

Washington -- Today, America's seniors will begin to receive much need relief because of the new health care reform law. *The Affordable Care Act* provides a one-time payment of \$250 to seniors who, in 2010, hit what is known as the "donut hole" or a gap in their Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage, wherein seniors must entirely pay for their prescriptions out-of-pocket. In 2009, 237,000 seniors in Texas fell into this gap.

"I am very proud to have voted for legislation that provides seniors in San Antonio with assistance paying for prescription medications that they need to maintain their health. I am also pleased that the system needed to distribute these rebate checks was designed and implemented in a manner that allows seniors to begin receiving these rebates three weeks ahead of schedule," stated Congressman Gonzalez.

Due to the ever-increasing cost of drugs, seniors in the "donut hole" often go without medication. Fortunately, *The Affordable Care Act* ultimately phases-out the donut hole. The \$250 rebate checks will be mailed monthly throughout the year as Medicare beneficiaries enter the coverage gap. In 2011, a 50% discount will be given on prescription drugs in the donut hole; and by 2020, the donut hole will be completely closed.

"This is but one of many components of the Affordable Care Act that will have direct, tangible benefits for Americans. I look forward to working with my colleagues as other benefits that improve seniors' access to affordable healthcare are rolled-out, including free preventive care and an increased crackdown on fraud and abuse in the Medicare system that will contribute to extending the solvency of Medicare by twelve years," added Gonzalez.

Making prescription drugs more affordable for seniors is only one of the many benefits for seniors included in the recently enacted health reform law. Other benefits for seniors include:

- Provides free preventive care services under Medicare, beginning in 2011.
- Strengthens Medicare by extending its solvency by an additional 12 years, from 2017 to 2029.
- Improves seniors' access to doctors.
- Continues to reduce waste, fraud and abuse.
- Improves care by helping doctors communicate and coordinate.
- Expands home and community-based services to keep seniors in their home, instead of in nursing homes.

